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SUBJECT: THERE WILL BE BLOOD: A RAINY-SEASON

REFLECTION ON THE FUTURE AND IMPACT OF THE CHADIAN
REBELLION

Classified By: A/DCM RGribbin for reasons 1.4 b and d.

SUMMARY

1. (C) Chadian rebels nearly took the capital last February and attacked in force again in the east in June. The rebellion's order of battle has changed since then, with the Zaghawa RFC suffering major defections and a new "Quadruple Alliance" of UFDD, FSR, UFCD, and UFDD/F replacing the old "Triple Alliance of the RFC, UFDD, and FSR that nearly toppled Deby in February. The balance of power seems to have shifted militarily to favor the GOC, which has strongly rearmed and reorganized its military, over the rebels, whose support from Sudan continues. The GOC's aggressive "intra-Chadian diplomacy, which undercut the RFC, continues to attract individual rebels and rebel sub-groups back into the fold. Legal condemnation of rebel chiefs in mid-August and confiscation of their property sent a stern message of no compromise that the GOC will probably apply with some flexibility, except perhaps for the most conspicuous rebel chieftains.

2. (C) All rebel formations are ethnically based and led by familiar figures in Chad's traditionally autocratic political life. None offers a plausible alternative to the kind of authoritarian government that the Deby regime represents. The Deby regime is on balance stronger today than in February -- militarily; diplomatically, thanks to the Dakar Accord and Tripoli's "Trilateral Initiative;" and in terms of domestic political support, thanks to a new government that includes senior opposition leaders and that is committed - at least programmatically -- to political reform, good governance, and national reconciliation. The more obscure but absolutely key area of support from his ethnic group, clan, and family is the one area in which Deby might be weaker than before, as his outreach to former opponents limits his ability to reward his ethnic, clan, and family in-groups.

3. (C) We do not know if international efforts will manage to stave off another round of regime vs. rebel violence. But we do know that, with a renewal of rebel attacks this winter, there will be blood. Nearly a thousand people were killed in the February events. And we know as well what renewed rebel attacks will mean for the country and its people, including the Darfur refugees, besides the cost in lives lost. Renewed rebel attacks will disrupt humanitarian efforts and imperil the humanitarian workers; cause the deaths of innocent civilians; complicate the future MINURCAT, EUFOR, and MINURCAT II; undermine the "Government of National

Reconciliation" that we recommended Deby install after the February debacle and destroy political infrastructure, weakening the GOC's shaky ability to maintain order and control its own military and police forces; justify Deby's GOC's massive rearmament program rather than socio-economic investment; disrupt the electoral reform process and likely postpone scheduled elections. Sustained rebel attacks, successful or not, will degrade the quality of life of Chadians and refugees alike, complicate international efforts to improve that quality of life, and retard Chad's admittedly halting progress toward democracy and good governance through credible elections. END SUMMARY.

WHO ARE THE REBELS?

¶4. (C) That depends, as the composition of the rebel community continues to change with time and events. The rebel "Triple Alliance" that attacked N'Djamena in February and nearly toppled Deby was composed the Rally of Democratic Forces (RFC), made up of fighters from Zaghawa ethnic group and led by Deby nephew Timan Erdimi, the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD), led by Mahamat Nouri and dominated by his own Gorane ethnic group, and the Front for the Salvation of the Republic (FSR), led by former Ambassador Ahmat Soubiane, an Arab-oriented grouping. Since February, however, the GOC's aggressive "Intra-Chadian Diplomacy," conducted under Libyan aegis, has resulted in major defections from Erdimi's RFC that

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threaten its existence as an effective rebel formation. The latest in a series of "ralliements" of RFC fighters occurred in mid-August, when the GOC's national mediator, Abderhaman Moussa, signed a "protocol to the Sirte Accord" with an RFC senior officer, Colonel Becher Issack Togoi. The accord, signed in the eastern border town of Iriba in the Chadian Zaghawa homeland as the Libyan ambassador to Chad looked on happily, brought several hundred fighters back to the GOC fold. Although the Erdimi brothers, Timan and Tom, the most prominent RFC leaders, remain unreconciled, this latest "ralliement" of RFC fighters may signal the demise of the RFC, as our French colleagues here long have been predicting. In any case, a weakened RFC likely cannot play its former role as one of the major elements of the next rebel attack on the Deby regime.

¶5. (C) The other two elements of the former "Triple Alliance," Nouri's UFDD and Soubiane's FSR, on the other hand, have retained significant strength, as they demonstrated in the June fighting that remained restricted to eastern Chad but did heavy damage there before GOC forces pushed them back into Sudan, inflicting heavy losses. They are now loosely associated in the so-called "National Alliance," created by Nouri and Soubiane to give a political face to the rebellion, along with two other groups -- the Union of Forces for Change and Democracy (UFCD), under Adouma, based on ethnic Ouaddaian fighters, and the UFDD/Fondamentale, a mostly Arab grouping led by Hassaballah Aboud Mackaye and Acheik Ibn Oumar. All these Chadian rebel groups have long received support and encouragement from the Government of Sudan, which seeks the overthrow of Deby. The GOC believes that Saudi interests and former President Habre support Mahamat Nouri's rebellion. The French here believe they have noticed a drop off of Sudanese assistance to the rebel groups. If so, a lower level of sustainment coupled with the earlier failing to prevail militarily has implications for future military activities and

consequently how and to what extent the rebels might seek other means to advance their cause.

HOW INTRA-CHADIAN DIPLOMACY WORKS

16. (C) When he first took office, Prime Minister Youssouf Saleh Abbas continued the GOC "Intra-Chadian Diplomatic Tradition" of welcoming former rebel groups and individuals back to the fold, rewarding them with financial and employment incentives. But this policy, which extends generosity and welcome in accordance with the Sirte Accord, requiring renunciation of violence and acceptance of the constitutional order, was tried sorely by the June attacks. Rebel performance in June -- alleged wanton destruction of state property and disrespect for civilians as well as a express rejection of reconciliation efforts - convinced the GOC that the rebel chiefs were "traitors" who were no longer worthy of trust in dialogue and negotiation, and who would be tried in court for their "war crimes."

17. (C) The GOC did just that in mid-August, trying the major rebel chieftains and forty lesser figures as well as former President Hissene Habre in absentia and condemning ten rebel leaders and Habre to death. The PM and Foreign Minister Faki have continued to affirm that the provisions of the Sirte Accord remain applicable to the rank and file of rebel fighters. This is probably flexible enough to extend to lesser leaders who repent of their former ways, as the case of Togoi and the other RFC rebels who rallied in August. The GOC stance toward the rebel hierarchs was hardened further by the legal action of mid-August, which in addition to the death and jail sentences, also seized the property of some two dozen of the condemned, which may well affect the families of the absent condemned men. Still, we believe that the GOC will be supple in its application of its new rules regarding rebels willing to defect.

WHAT THE REBELS WANT

18. (C) It is important to note that all the rebel formations are ethnically based and are led by

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familiar figures in Chad's traditionally autocratic political life. The Erdimis are Deby kinsmen who worked for him in senior positions. Mahamat Nouri was a minister under Habre and Deby, who sent him as ambassador to Saudi Arabia, a position he specifically requested. Soubiane was Deby's ambassador to the United States. And so on. None of them has credible credentials as a democratic, inclusive leader who could offer a plausible alternative to the kind of authoritarian government that the Deby regime represents, despite facile rebel claims of so doing. One of the likely first fruits of a rebel victory that overthrows Deby would be an internecine struggle among the victorious rebel war lords for the empty throne: One of the reasons that the February attack ultimately failed was progressive inability of the rebel groups to cooperate effectively as victory loomed, as each rebel chief prepared to assume supreme power himself.

THE DIPLOMATIC CONTEXT

19. (C) The diplomatic setting for the GOC-Chad rebel confrontation has changed since February. The Dakar

Accord signed in March by Chad's Deby and Sudan's Bachir provides for a Contact Group of African nations - Libya, Eritrea, Gabon, and Congo Brazzaville - to monitor compliance with the Accord. The CG has continued to meet in various capitals and has formulated a vague but ambitious plan for a border observation and monitoring group to lessen tensions along the Chad-Sudan frontier. Chad wants such a border observation group deployed as soon as possible; Sudan may be less impatient about such a group. It is unlikely that the CG, even with Libya on board, has the resources and expertise to implement a border observation group.

¶10. (C) Libya, apparently unhappy with having to work as part of the CG, came up with another diplomatic initiative in July/August, in the belief that the time was now ripe to try to bring the two feuding leaders back to the more productive relationship they once enjoyed -- Bashir was weakened by the May JEM attack on Khartoum, the deteriorating situation in Darfur, and the ICC legal action; Deby feared renewed Chad rebel offensives like the one that shook his regime in February. The Libyans got Bashir and Deby to agree to cease all propaganda and media attacks; to reestablish diplomatic relations and reopen borders; and to attend a summit meeting in Tripoli. The essence of this "Trilateral Initiative" is to pressure both leaders to end support for rebel groups on their own territory. The Libyan Ambassador told us that this initiative was not intended to replace the implementation process of the March Dakar Accord, but to "reinforce" it.

THE MILITARY BALANCE

¶11. (C) We judge that the GOC is much stronger militarily than it was in February. We know that the GOC has beefed up its military in terms of aircraft, both rotary and fixed-wing. It has purchased a whole new arsenal of armored vehicles and heavy weapons, which it paraded proudly and pointedly on the August 11 Independence Day holiday. The GOC has reinforced its military presence along the eastern frontier with Sudan. EUFOR commander General Ganacia told us recently that in his view the GOC military was stronger now than in February, in armaments, equipment, vehicles, and firepower. He said that its tactical organization and leadership had also improved. He cited the ANT's June success in containing rebel attacks, decisively defeating them at Am Zoer, and chasing them back into Sudan as an "impressive" performance. The French here echo Ganacia's view that the military "correlation of forces" is now generally in favor of the GOC, and against the rebels - depending of course on how much Sudanese and other support the rebels were receiving.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT: THE HOME FRONT

¶12. (C) We believe that President Deby is stronger politically at home than he was in February. At the

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urging of international partners, including the U.S., he named a new Prime Minister whose cabinet included prominent leaders of the (unarmed) opposition in senior positions and whose watchwords were national reconciliation, good governance, and political reform. Also with international encouragement, Deby created a commission to investigate abuses committed in the wake of the February rebel attack and has promise to implement its recommendations. He has relaunched the

electoral reform process begun by the August 13, 2007 accord between the governing and opposition parties that provides a roadmap towards credible elections in 2009 and 2011. The new government restored press freedom and has reform projects in hand for the army, the justice system, and for poverty reduction. It has worked hard to preserve relationships with the World Bank and the IMF.

THE ETHNIC CONTEXT: A WEAK POINT

¶13. (C) In Chad, relations within the ethnic group, the clan and the family are the most important determinants of political behavior, trumping all other considerations, including ideology and political philosophy. This is where we think the one area in which the Deby regime is perhaps weaker than it was in February. The very political opening to the opposition and to the reforms they prize creates difficulties within Deby's Zaghawa ethnic group, his Bideyat clan, and his family circle, by diluting his ability to reward some of these in-groups. Our own emergency action planning ranks the "coup de main" from someone inside the presidential "coudette" as just as likely as another coup d'etat attempt from armed rebels, albeit less seasonally predictable.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) We are not sanguine that developments during this rainy season will result in any sort of resolution of the rebel vs. regime stand-off. We hope of course that the principle international efforts -- the Dakar Accord implementation process and the Libyan Trilateral Initiative -- to stave off a repetition of the violence that began at the end of the last rainy season will be successful. But we note that the main rebel leaders signed the Sirte Accord in October 2007 and that those same leaders initiated their 2007-2008 attacks in November 2007. We do not know if another dry season of fighting between Deby loyalists and rebels will result in some clear-cut victory for either side or if the inconclusive but destructive cycle of attack and counterattack will continue on Chadian soil. But we do know that with a renewal of rebel attacks this winter, there will be blood.

¶15. (C) We think that the balance of power now favors the regime over the rebellion. The Deby regime for its part intends to eliminate the rebel menace, which is an existential one for Deby and his loyalists. It anticipates military confrontations, for which it has prepared seriously. It is going to be hard for the GOC to be magnanimous, but it is likely to be willing to be flexible if it appears that rebels can be accommodated within the Sirte Accord framework in some way. The GOC, however, is not going to welcome talks on the probable rebel terms of "inclusive national dialogue." The rebels for their part appear to be ready and able to stay in the field and threaten the stability of the Deby regime as long as Sudan offers refuge and significant support. Rebel war lords will continue to agitate and plan for action against Deby and for "democracy," i.e., their chance to replace him.

¶16. (C) We do know what the renewal of rebel attacks will mean for the country and its people, including the Darfur refugees, besides the cost in lives lost. There is an historical record of the estimated twenty rebel attacks in force on Chadian soil since December 2005. The February events cost nearly a thousand Chadian lives. Rebel attacks will result in the disruption of humanitarian efforts in favor of the

refugees and IDPs in eastern Chad, as happened most recently in February and June. They will threaten the safety of the humanitarian workers in the East, as

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occurred at Goz Beida in June, when the rebels took and sacked a town where humanitarian workers lodged. They will result in the deaths of innocent civilians, as occurred massively in February and less so in June. They will undermine the "Government of National Reconciliation" that we recommended Deby install after the February debacle.

117. (C) Renewed rebel attacks also will complicate the continued deployment of MINURCAT and the willingness of EU nations to withdraw EUFOR forces deliberately as an expected MINURCAT II begins to deploy. They will result in the destruction of Chadian political infrastructure as occurred massively in February in the capital and extensively in eastern Chad in June. They will undermine the GOC's already precarious ability to maintain order, including discipline over its own military and police forces. They will continue to justify the GOC in its massive rearmament program rather than investment in priority social sectors. They will disrupt the provision of services like electric power, water, sanitation, etc, to Chadian people. They will disrupt as well implementation of the August 13 electoral reform process which likely will postpone the legislative and communal elections scheduled for 2009. Rebel attacks, successful or not, degrade the quality of life of Chadians and refugees alike, complicate international efforts to improve that quality of life, and retard Chad's admittedly halting progress toward democracy and good governance through credible elections.

NIGRO